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PRACTICAL REMARKS ON THE “STOMATITIS ULCEROSA” OF CHILDREN, WITH CASES.

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PRACTITIONERS who are much engaged in hospital or dispensary practice, or even in that of the metropolis, must often meet with troublesome cases of stomatitis ulcerosa, or ulcerative affections of the mouths of infants and young children; and these not arising from any specific cause, but depending solely, or principally, upon debility, or a deteriorated condition of the general health, with possibly some trivial local cause, in some cases, superadded. I have myself had occasion to treat many such cases, more especially in public practice; and having found the following simple method of treatment, almost invariably, speedily and certainly successful, I am induced to make it the subject of a brief communication.

The term “stomatitis ulcerosa” sufficiently and accurately expresses the nature of this affection; but in its mode of origin, situation, and extent, it presents many varieties. Thus, in one form, it commences as a small inflammatory spot, either on the frenum of the tongue, the outer surface of the gums, or the mucous membrane of the cheek or lip; but, wherever it commences, ulceration speedily supervenes, attended with febrile disturbance, a coated tongue, profuse salivation, and a disordered state of the stomach and digestive organs. In another form, it is found to be connected with the passage of some of the larger teeth through the gum, more especially when several are about to make their appearance together. In this case, the gum becomes swollen, painful, and dark-coloured; and, after a few days, the portion over the protruding teeth gives way by ulceration, which, in some cases, extends considerably, attended with tumefaction of the mouth

and cheeks, increased salivary discharge, and febrile disturbance. More frequently, however, it commences with a general swelling and irritation of the gums, together with much fœtor of the breath, a coated tongue, and much gastric disorder. Along the upper margin of the gum, or rather that which is in contact with the teeth, a line of ulceration now soon becomes developed; and this, when once begun, rapidly spreads, the gums, at the same time, being spongy, swollen, and very painful. Unless excited by some local cause, such as the irritation of a decayed tooth, it usually commences in the lower jaw, and from thence is communicated to the mucous membrane of the corresponding cheek. The irritation attending it affects the salivary and cervical glands in a remarkable manner; both become swollen, and the former secrete so profusely that the child appears to be constantly dribbling. In this form there is generally some febrile disturbance, and much gastro-intestinal disorder. If severe, it may not only cause destruction of the gums, but loosening of the teeth, suppuration of their sockets, and partial necrosis of the jaw. Its intensity, however, varies very considerably in different cases; in some it is so slight as to require little or no special treatment, whilst in others it can only be controlled by very prompt and energetic measures.

These diseases are almost peculiar to the period of infancy and childhood; and, as far as I have observed, occur principally in children who have been badly fed, are exposed to atmospheric vicissitudes, reside in unhealthy localities, or have been born of strumous or syphilitic parents. That it is essentially a constitutional affection, and not merely occasioned by bad air, endemic influences, or unwholesome food, is, I think, certain; for I have known it to occur in robust-looking children, who had been living in healthy, open, situations, and well supplied with good nourishment, and all the necessaries of life. In these cases, however, the disease was almost invariably found to have arisen from some local irritation, such as that of a carious tooth; and, when protracted, to be connected with some latent scrofulous taint; whereas, in other cases, it will arise in the absence of any local cause, and, apparently, from nothing else than a very deteriorated condition of the health.

In the general management of these cases, we are directed to employ, locally, strong solutions of the nitrate of silver, or of the sulphate of copper or zinc, with or without astringent, stimulating, or detergent gargles, and to administer, at the same time, quinine, tonics, and a liberal diet. I formerly followed these instructions closely, but sometimes with equivocal success; and I am now, after repeated trials, disposed to give the preference to the following method of treatment. It consists in removing, in the first place, any apparent cause of irritation, such as a decayed tooth, should it exist, and in applying, daily, the dilute nitric acid of the pharmacopœia, to the whole of the ulcerated surfaces, by means of a sponge, or camel's-hair pencil; whilst, at the same time, the sesquicarbonate of ammonia is given in full doses, combined with the citrate of iron. When the tongue is coated, and the alvine discharges are unhealthy, it is necessary to premise an emetic of ipecacuanha and squills, as well as a purgative of calomel and rhubarb. It is also necessary that the patient should be well supported by a nutritious diet, and an adequate allowance of malt liquor, or wine.

I will briefly add, that the employment of ammonia in these cases was first suggested to me from observing its beneficial effects in the ulcerative affections of the mouth and throat, which occur in children in connexion with scarlet fever. And, alone, it will accomplish a cure, as some of the following cases shew, although less speedily than when combined with the citrate of iron and the local application of dilute nitric acid. The latter remedy appears to have a remarkable influence in improving the character of the ulceration and arresting its progress. The sloughy, dirty, yellowish appearance, which it generally presents, is soon changed for a florid, healthy, granulating surface; and this result would appear to depend upon the moderately-stimulating properties of the remedy, which are not disproportionate to the exhausted vital powers of the part. The following cases will serve to illustrate the results of this practice.

CASE. J. F—d, aged 3, was brought to the Paddington Free Dispensary, January 3, 1851, suffering from severe and well-marked ulcerative inflammation of the mouth. The gums throughout were swollen and spongy, and the margins adjoining the teeth were deeply ulcerated; the right cheek was swollen and tense, and, internally, the mucous membrane was extensively ulcerated; the breath was fetid, the salivary secretion very great, and the glands, below the jaw, swollen and painful; the tongue was much furred, the appetite bad, the bowels disordered, and the child's appearance generally cachectic.

TREATMENT. R. Ammon. sesquicarb., ferri ammon.-citrat., ãã gr. v., quartâ quâque horâ sumend. ex aquâ.

R. Acidi nitrici dil. ʒss., ft. lotio modo dicto bis die utend.; ol. ricini ʒj. mane p. r. n. s.

January 10th. The child is, in every respect, improved; the gums are looking healthier, as is also the ulceration of the cheek. *Persistet.*

January 14th. The child is convalescent, scarcely any ulceration being any where perceptible.

CASE. Mary S—r, aged 4, was brought to the Paddington Free Dispensary, Feb. 4th, 1851, suffering from ulcerative disease of the gums, throat, and inner surface of the cheeks. She had always been an ailing and delicate child, and had now a very strumous appearance. The disease was first perceived by the mother about a week ago, whose attention was drawn to it by the child's breath being very offensive; and, on examining the mouth, she found it ulcerated as described. The child's appetite is bad, her bowels irregular, and tongue coated.

TREATMENT. R. Ammon. sesquicarb., ferri ammon.-citrat. ãã gr. v., quartâ quâque horâ sumend. ex aquâ.

R. Acid. nitric. dil. ʒss., ft. lotio modo dicto bis die utend.

February 11th. Much better; ulceration, generally, much less, and looking healthier. *February 15th.* Quite well.

CASE. Edward B—t, aged 2½ years, was brought to the Paddington Free Dispensary, Aug. 1851, suffering from ulcerative disease of the mouth, lips, tongue, throat, and inner cheeks. His breath was offensive, the tongue foul, and the pain produced by the ulceration was so severe that he could neither eat nor drink without extreme suffering. His nights were much disturbed; he was feverish, and the bowels were a good deal disordered. The child had been, for some time, out of health, and, indeed, never very strong.

TREATMENT. R. Ammon. sesquicarb., ferri ammon.-citrat., āā gr. v., quartā quāque horā sumend. ex aquā.

R. Acid. nitric. dil. ʒss., ft. lotio modo dicto bis die utend.

Under this treatment the child's mouth got perfectly well in a week; but the medicine was continued for some time longer. On the 20th September the child was brought to me again; he was then in the possession of perfect health, and the mother told me that he was better than she had ever known him to be.

CASE. Frances F—r, aged $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, was brought to the Paddington Free Dispensary, Dec. 13th, 1850, suffering from severe ulceration of the gums, lips, and cheeks. She had never been very strong, and had latterly been living in a low, badly-drained house. She had been suffering from the disease for three weeks, and, when admitted, was weak, pale, and cachectic.

TREATMENT. R. Ammoniae sesquicarb., ferri ammon.-citrat., āā gr. ij ss., quartā quāque horā sumend. ex aquā. R. Acid. nitric. dil. ʒ ss., ft. lotio modo dicto bis die utend.

December 23rd. This treatment had been continued for rather more than a week, and the child is now perfectly well.

CASE. Hannah W—e, aged $1\frac{1}{2}$, was brought to the Paddington Free Dispensary, July 15, 1851, suffering from ulceration of the mouth and gums. The child's breath was disagreeable, her tongue coated, and the stomach and bowels disordered. She had been living in a low unhealthy locality, and had been ill a fortnight before applying at the Dispensary, and had been daily getting worse.

TREATMENT. R. Ammoniae sesquicarb. gr. iij ss., sæpe sumend. ex lacte. R. Pulv. purg. gr. v, hs. pr. r. n.

July 25th. Ulceration healed, and child perfectly well.

CASE. Isaac H—r, aged 11, applied October 1, 1850, suffering from ulcerative inflammation of the gums and mucous membrane of the right cheek. His father had observed that his breath was very offensive the preceding day, and, on looking into his mouth, found it ulcerated. The mouth had a strongly gangrenous appearance; the fœtor was very great. He could not masticate without difficulty, and the tongue was furred and excoriated. He was ordered six grains of the sesquicarbonate of ammonia, every four hours, in water, and, at the same time, a nutritious diet, with porter. In a fortnight he was quite well. A brother and sister of this boy were attacked at the same time, in a similar way, and recovered, under the same treatment, in about a fortnight.

Chester Place, Hyde Park Gardens, Sept. 1852.